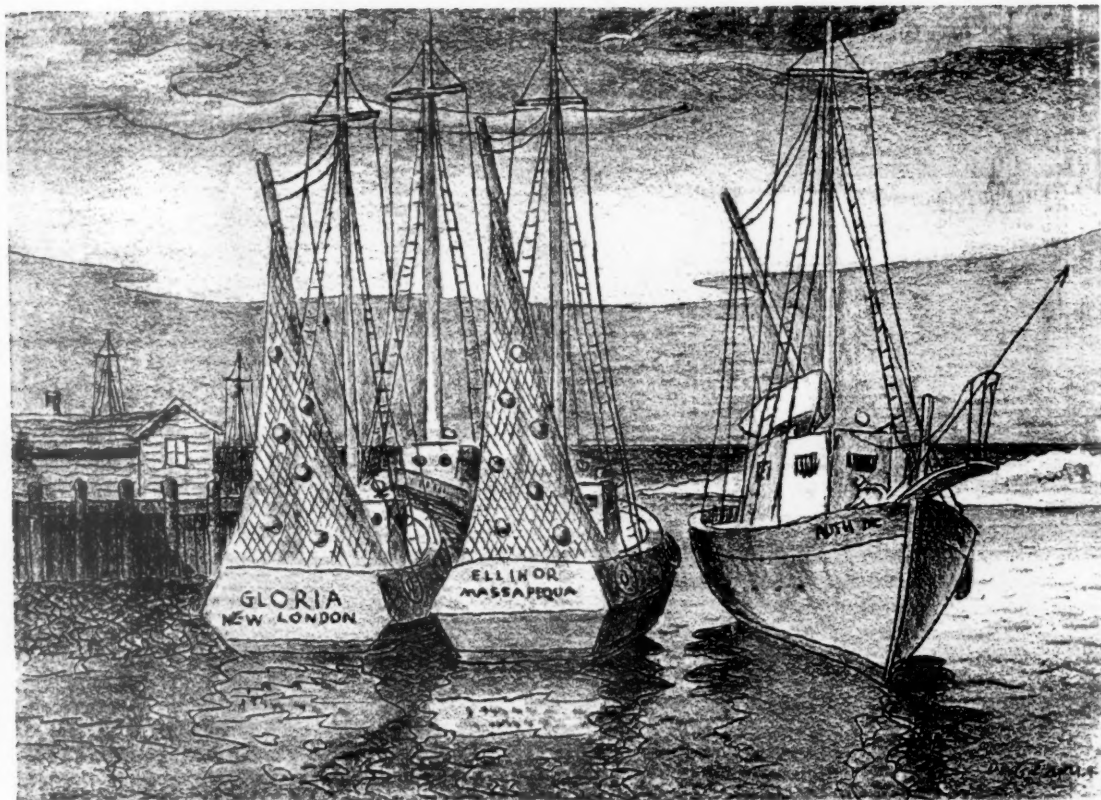


LONG ISLAND FORUM



BOATS AT FORT POND BAY, MONTAUK—Joseph DiGemma

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Julian Denton Smith, Secretary
Nassau County Historical Society
Paul Bailey, President Suffolk County Historical Society
Kate Wheeler Strong
Dr. John C. Huden, Vermont University
Felix Reitschneider
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LETTERS FROM FORUM READERS

JULY 1953

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Boats at Fort Pond Bay

Fort Pond Bay, opening into Gardiner's Bay from the northerly side of Montauk, has long been one of the most active commercial fishing centres anywhere on Long Island. In recent years it has become a popular rendezvous for deep sea sports fishermen.

Mr. Di Gemma's cover illustration for this issue was etched by him from his own original work. Reproductions 9 1/4 x 13 inches, in mats 16x20, hand-etched and hand-printed, ready for framing, all in original colors, may be obtained by addressing Joseph P. Di Gemma, 74 Park Lane, Massapequa. The price postpaid is \$5.

* * *

Andre's Capture

I was very much interested in the article in the April Forum on Historic Raynham Hall, as to Major Andre.

Now Robert Culper Jr., may have been a fine secret agent for General Washington, and all honor to him, but in history, as I read it, Major Andre was captured up near Sleepy Hollow by a squad of men under John Yerks who went out to block all roads over which cattle could be driven to the British lines. In Pictorial History of the Revolutionary War by J. L. Lossing in an article on page 755, there is a statement that I believe to be correct.

In the book, Historical Sketches of the Romer and Van Tassel family, there are statements as to these men, all of which were made by persons who knew the men, and the ground, far better than some of our supposed historians.

John Yerks was my Grandmother's G. G. Grandfather. He, Isaac See and the others were never given the credit for their part in the capture. These facts are in the Souvenir Volume, with the records issued when the Revolutionary Soldiers Monument was dedicated in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, on the 19th day of October 1894.

Page 100, the Romer book, states that the names of Paulding, Van Wart and Williams are emblazoned on the pages of history, while those

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Song Sparrows and Other Birds

EVERYONE should have been aware of the arrival of spring in 1953. It came like an old friend ringing the doorbell and calling, "Here I am! I'm coming in!" Some years its arrival is masked by cold snaps, continuing spells of bad weather, and March, April and May that all look exactly alike. But in 1953 Long Islanders could say that winter lasted right through March 12th, but March 13th came spring.

The night of March 12th brought rain; and how it rained! Surface water on the south shore sought the ancient brooks, streams and creeks for direct access to the bay. But the waterways were not there — citified towns and villages had filled them in. So the rain water flooded the streets, ran into cellars, undermined sidewalks, overflowed reservoirs, and brought all manner of inconveniences.

The rain water was warm, not the icy torrents of winter. Daffodils, which had been fooling around just out of the ground, stretched a couple of inches over night. Grassy crocuses showed color in a few hours. Weeping willows

Julian Denton Smith
Secretary Nassau County Historical Society

changed from yellows to greens. Swamp maples began to look knobby and reddish. The earth came to life.

Friday, the 13th, brought a gentle northwest breeze and the water settled out of front lawns, roads came up from beneath vast puddles, snowdrops opened wide, daffodil buds swelled among their leaves, and the first peepers called at supper time. The earth smelled good.

Then came a most unforgettable Saturday! The bluebirds were here. One preened himself in the early morning sunshine on top of a pole in my raspberry rack. A robin tried to get his solo straightened out high up in a neighbor's oak tree. Yellow, white and purple crocuses burst into bloom next door. The azaleas turned from bronze to green. Fresh lawns unrolled like new carpets, and late in the day, frogs jingled like sleigh bells. Daylilies and iris doubled the size of their metallic-green leaf clusters. The earth prepared to give its increase.

As soon as I could hurry through my usual Saturday chores, I took the car to the beach for there the changes of seasons are magnified. Sure enough, where I had seen one robin on the mainland, here were ten. They picked up weed and grass seeds at the edge of flocks of grackles. Red-wing blackbirds swarmed everywhere and their shoulder pads were bright like bread dunked in tomato juice. Song sparrows held tightly to the tops of bayberry while they tipped back their heads to fill the air with their joyous song. Beach grass had sharp, new spikes sticking about two inches out of the sand, just right to stab bare feet softened by winter shoes. The

beach sand turned white, the first time it regained that color since last fall's shortening days. The thermometer found its way into the low 70s and I took on my first layer of suntan for the season.

Those song sparrows are interesting creatures. They do not all leave us in the fall. Some stay on through winter but they save their glorious aria until the blood begins to flow a little faster on the first spring days. I always enjoy bringing a song sparrow into my field glasses. He will fly to the highest tip of a bayberry thicket and look things over. If all is to his liking, he will tilt his head back and pour out his very melodious doxology. He lowers his head at the conclusion of the song and is likely to dart away to another vantage point and repeat the stance and song. For the past two years one of the song sparrows on the beach seems to have two different songs. The quality of the tone is unchanged, but the arrangements of the notes definitely differ. I sometimes think there are three melodies, but I am not entirely sure of the third. He sings his songs over and over until presently he re-



SONG SPARROW



SHARP-TAILED SPARROW

members some little errand he has down the beach, and off he goes.

Years ago I had military training at Fort Terry on Plum Island, east of Orient Point. The officers encouraged singing in the ranks as we marched along. In our company we had a little fellow with a clear tenor voice. His lack of height put him in the last squad and always at the rear of the files as we moved along in column of fours. His voice led the singing and frequently we would all be silent just to hear his song sweep up over our heads. He did "The Palms" with a swinging lilt that reduced heavy packs to mere cushions of air. One day as he sang, a song sparrow seemed overjoyed with the melody and added his bit. The bird skipped along—entirely out of sight—from thicket to thicket beside the road lingering long enough to sing his little air. Our tenor at the rear of the company failed to hear his accompanist but there are many of us who have never forgotten the duet. We often recall it when we chance to meet.

I wonder how many in visiting the American Museum of Natural History have stopped to study the mounted group of song sparrows representing the centers of distribution of seven of the geographical races of this bird. Perhaps no other bird of temperate or arctic North America has varied its form so markedly in reaction to the influences of physical environments. The song sparrow that we know is found along the whole Atlantic coast and as far inland as the wooded valleys of the Great Plains. In California each drainage area has its own peculiar type of song sparrow. There are six different forms in Alaska.

Although song sparrows appear in different forms, they all eat pretty much the same things. The greater part of their diet consists of weed seeds, about 75 percent. The remainder is insects—beetles,

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Whaling's Expanding Years

Paul Bailey

A picture of whaling as carried on in colonial days along the south shore of Long Island is supplied by Dr. Edward Richard Shaw in his "Legends of Fire Island Beach," published in 1895. He writes:

"From the days of the earliest settlement, whaling crews used to go on the Beach. They would live there during the season and watch the sea by day, ready to launch their boats and push off whenever they saw a whale blow. Their supplies were brought from the south side of the Island, and fires were built on Long Point, as a signal for the crew to come off. The Long Point of those days is now Ireland's Point, which pushes out into the bay a mile, about, west of the mouth of Carman's River."

When the fire was lighted on Long Point, some of the whalers would cross Moriches Bay to receive the supplies brought by their families. Meanwhile a fire would be lighted on the beach to direct the party back and from this practice the name of Fire Place was given the section now known as South Haven.

A similar practice was used in Babylon town and in certain parts of present Nassau County. Along the southerly shore of the Rockaway Peninsula, however, there was no need to follow this system. Although the records covering this area are seemingly conflicting, it is pretty certain that it was the site of several whaling stations as was, in fact, practically every portion of the south shore from Jamaica to Montauk Point. Declares Daniel M. Tredwell in his "Personal Reminiscences": "All stranded whales were subject to regulations made by the General Court in 1644, and we believe these regulations applied to the entire sea-coast of Long Island."

In Daniel Denton's "Brief Description," published in 1670, we read: "Upon the south side of the island in the winter the store of whale and grampusses which the inhabitants bring with small boats to make a trade of catching to their no small benefit. Also an innumerable number of seal which make an excellent oyle. They be all winter upon some of the broken marshes and beaches or bars of sand and might be easily gotten were there some skillful man to undertake it."

Towards the end of the 18th century, more and more Long Islanders turned from shore-whaling to the deepsea variety, due to a growing scarcity of the big mammals in local waters. As the white man's improved methods of killing drove the whales further away, an ever increasing number of sailing vessels were used to hunt them down. At first, an overnight sail often proved sufficient to carry a crew to the whaling grounds and small, open sloops were used for this purpose. In those days one of the most popular whaling areas was a few leagues

to the southeast of Montauk Point.

The history of Long Island whaling during the 1700's and, as a matter of fact, until after the War of 1812 was a constant lengthening of voyages towards the south and with it a steady increase in the tonnage and equipment of whaling ships. The first drastic increase in the number of vessels so employed came immediately after that war when local whaling ships were brought out of hiding in Connecticut and proved inadequate to meet the new demand of local capital and local manpower to enter the industry.

For several years thereafter, the majority of the island's whaling vessels found sufficient game no further south than the West Indies. A few years later, however, the fleet was operating off what were known as the False Banks of Brazil, always extending their operations still further south. Among the Long Island whale-ships of that period were the Argonaut, owned by Silas and Lewis Howell and commanded by Captain Eliphalet Halsey; the Abigail, Andes, Charlotte, Governor, Octavia and the Fair Helen. On the latter vessel, commanded by Captain



A LONG ISLAND WHALESHIP

Oliver Fowler, a Sag Harbor youth named Henry Green made his first voyage.

Four years later Green became captain of the Abigail and thereafter for twenty-two years, commanding in turn the Octavia, Hannibal, Phoenix, Hudson and Huron, was one of the most successful whaleship skippers hereabouts. Among the Long Island ship-owners of this period were, besides the above-mentioned Silas and Lewis Howell, also Stephen and Benjamin of the same family, John, Gabriel and Benjamin Tyler, Philetus Havens, Thomas Beebe, the Gardiners, Cooks, Woods, Conklins, Cornelius Slight, Post & Sherry, James E. Smith, Benjamin Wade who also built ships, the Hunttings, Budds, W. R. and C. Hitchcock and William Cooper, also a shipbuilder. There were others who built their own vessels and many who became silent partners in a single ship or a single voyage.

James Fenimore Cooper, famous for his Leather Stocking Tales and other great 19th century novels, did his first work as a novelist at Sag Harbor and, incidentally, entered the Long Island whaling industry in 1819 as part owner of the ship Union. Cooper, who belongs to Cooperstown, N. Y., which was named for his family and where he lies buried, was visiting relatives at Sag Harbor as a young man when he began to write his first book, "Precaution." One also recognizes the Long Island atmosphere in his story, "Sea Lions," in which he refers to the "small seaport town, where the whole industry of the place was connected with ships and shipping."

The 262-ton Union, the first Long Island whaling ship to be owned and financed by a group of shareholders, left on her maiden voyage in 1819, commanded by Captain Jonathan Osborne of Wainscott, himself an expert harpooner whose previous exploits are believed to have been the in-

spiration for some of the adventures described in Cooper's novels of the sea. He was credited with having killed 150 whales and according to Slight was among the few men who, dragged under water in a tangled line by a diving whale, lived to tell of how he slashed the line with his sheath-knife and ascended half dead to be rescued by his shipmates.

The Union had a most successful career, making fourteen voyages which produced cargoes worth \$350,000. Another Long Island ship of this period which proved profitable was the Argonaut. She arrived home in June, 1819, bringing 1,700 barre's of sperm, a much more valuable product than ordinary whale oil. On this voyage which had begun two years before, the Argonaut made history by continuing on southward of the False Banks of Brazil and becoming the first Long Island



whaleship to round Cape Horn and operate in the waters of the Pacific.

The oil-soaked port of Sag Harbor experienced its first of several disastrous conflagrations on May 26, 1817, leaving most of the waterfront and business section a complete shambles. Because of the destruction, but two whaleships discharged cargoes at that port during the balance of the year. In 1818 the number increased to four, the following year to five and in 1820 to six. In 1822 nine whaleships brought in cargoes and thereafter for more than two decades the annual increase was steady as well as sufficiently great to absorb all available capital and manpower.

The ships of that era were built to last, barring accident. The Hannibal, launched in 1818, served as a whaler con-

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Song Sparrows

Continued from Page 124

weevils, ants, wasps, bugs and caterpillars. The song sparrows that live with us eat grasshoppers at which the westerners turn up their noses.

I always enjoy watching red-wing blackbirds. There seems to be an element of play in most of the things they do and a remarkable, boastful strut in the actions of the male. Nearly seven-eighths of the food of the red-wing blackbird is weed seeds. This means they must spend considerable time feeding on the ground, yet they never seem to walk easily or naturally. Most often the walk is in a pigeon-toed manner somewhat suggestive of a caged parrot. The red-wings make wild jabs at one another and always act startled and a bit insulted that the other fellow made such a pass. They seem to chase each other both on the ground and in the air more for the fun of chasing and being chased than for anything else. I understand

that if I enjoy the usual male strut, I should see him near the nests during the breeding season. Apparently a male will have more than one wife, frequently several. Each female builds her own nest and rears her own little brood while the male struts from nest to nest in a supervisory capacity. He is very mindful of his beautiful wing coloring and pleasures in displaying himself to his extended household.

Red-wing blackbirds love swampy places and the degree of salinity of the water seems to make little difference to them. They like to perform on swaying plume grass. On several occasions I have seen them fly with great speed against a break of plume grass, clutch on to a single cane and bend the grass far over by the force of the flight. Then they hang on as the cane sways back and forth — an inverted pendulum—until the wind alone becomes the predominant force. They will do the same thing on drooping willow branches.

Bluebirds and robins in addition to being rather close relatives have a common trust in and liking for human beings. The song sparrow seldom shows himself, whereas the robin and bluebird seem to enjoy man's admiration and approval. I guess all of us become exasperated at the careless way a mother robin brings on her family. She is never completely satisfied until she puts her nest in a readily accessible location for all the cats in the neighborhood. When the young wings should support the youngsters in air, they don't. Then the mother gets all her little ones spread over the lawn, very much more than she can properly care for, and thereby actually hands an easy meal to any cat that comes along. The mother is often an extremely brave little thing, almost throwing herself to a cat in an effort to save the brood. Perhaps the mother robin expects human beings to back up their delight in her by doing something about the cats, but that

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A LONG ISLAND FAMILY OF MALLARDS

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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 122

equally deserving but less fortunate are known to only a few.

Just what sort of politics was used to get medals for Paulding, Van Wart and Williams we do not know, but something was rotten somewhere. They were buck privates. There is no mention of rank and if Congress wants to, here is a chance to right a wrong.

Most libraries have these books, and just why these records have not been consulted looks a bit queer to me. There are living in Suffolk County today, four families of descendants of that John Yerks Squad, the Pauldings, Van Warts, Stivers and Pfeifers.

I. S. Stivers
Samoset, Florida

* * *

"Listen to the Surf"

Whoever thought of giving the fifty-year depositors of the Union Savings Bank a subscription to the Forum had a fine imagination. It was a wonderful Long Island gift.

I particularly enjoyed Mr. Julian Smith's beautifully written article "Listen to the Surf" in the April number. I remember as a little girl, during a winter storm, waking to hear the roar of the surf and the foghorn of a schooner too near the shore. Now the roar of traffic is all one can hear from Main Street.

The many articles about the North Fork also particularly interest me because my roots from both the Tuthills and the Terrys started

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Volume 4, 1941, L.I. Forum, bound in green buckram. Gilt lettering. Also Volume 8 (1945) similarly bound. Also Volumes 13-14 (1950-51) in one book.

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Whaling's Expansion

Continued from page 126

tinuously until the year 1845 when at Rio de Janeiro she was officially condemned and destroyed. The Thames brought in cargoes totaling \$200,000 before being declared unseaworthy in 1838, some years before the industry reached its peak.

According to the late T. Bache Bleeker, one of the founders of the Whaling Museum located at Cold Spring Harbor, the first whaleship to clear that port, then known as Cold Spring, was the 379-ton Tuscarora, on September 9, 1837. This fact is verified by Starbuck's "History of the American Whale Fishery" which reports that 18 months later the vessel returned with 1,280 barrels of whaleoil and 120 barrels of sperm, taken in the south Atlantic.

The year of the Tuscarora's departure also marked the organizing of the Cold Spring Whaling Company of which the "managing owner" was John H. Jones, great-grandson of Major Thomas Jones, settler of Fort Neck (Massapequa) in 1705. The latter was one of Nassau County's earliest shore-whalers, being licensed by Governor Cornbury "to take drift whales on ye gut adjoining Mr. Nicoll's land (Islip) and the west end of Gravesend Beach" (Brooklyn).

Practically all whaling operations from Cold Spring were financed by this company. Among its principal ships, besides the Tuscarora, were the Barclay, Monmouth, N. P. Tallmadge, Richmond, Alice, Huntsville, Splendid and Sheffield. The latter, of 579 tons, was said to be the largest of all Long Island whaling ships. One of the smallest was the Barclay, of only 167 tons, which on her first voyage brought back 664 barrels of sperm, worth considerably more than whaleoil. Such a cargo meant enormous profits to the company which was capitalized for \$100,000.

One of the most profitable

voyages of a Cold Spring vessel was that of the Sheffield in 1849 when she returned with 200 barrels of sperm, 4,000 barrels of whaleoil and 22,000 pounds of whale-bone. One voyage of the bark Monmouth in 1854 produced 345 barrels of sperm, 1,380 of whaleoil and 11,700 pounds of bone. The best years for the Cold Spring Whaling Company were from 1850 to '54. The years 1855 to '60 showed ever diminishing returns and in the latter year, the company having disposed of the last of its ships, the Sheffield, Splendid and Monmouth, closed its books and ended the industry for that port.

During its heyday, however, Cold Spring was among the island's busiest shipping centers. On the wharf on the harbor's westerly side stood a huge building known as the Cooper Shop in which oil barrels were made. Other nearby buildings produced or sold various other whaling paraphernalia and the section, which is now occupied by the Biological Association, was known as Bung Town.

The easterly side of the harbor was called Bedlam street because of the roisy sailors who there sought amusement. Overlooking the water from a nearby hill stood a small cannon which was fired to announce an incoming ship. At such times, men, women and children gathered on the

wharf to greet friends and relatives or simply to hear "foreign news" first hand.

Often the news given was not pleasant. In 1845 one ship reported the death of John Drury at Honolulu. The Huntsville's mate had been killed by a whale. In 1850 Captain Winters, having lost his ship, the Richmond, in Bering Strait, died aboard another vessel. There were many widows in Cold Spring in those days.

During the year 1841 whaling reached new heights for Long Island. That year thirty vessels brought to Sag Harbor an aggregate of 6,727 barrels of sperm, 58,827 barrels of whaleoil and 482,110 pounds of bone. By then, a voyage had become a matter of, not months, but years. Operations had been extended from the South Atlantic, around Cape Horn or through the Straits of Magellan to the Pacific. Then up the west coast, further each year, the Long Island ships had gradually approached Alaskan waters, meanwhile crossing the Pacific to Hawaii, then called the Sandwich Islands which became the principal base of supplies for east coast whalers.

Besides whaleoil, Long Island ships often brought back native sailors from distant ports. At Sag Harbor during this era Kanakas, Portuguese,

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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 128

at Founders' Landing in Southold
town. Best wishes.

(Miss) Rosetta Terry
Patchogue

* * *

Oyster Bay Town History

For the official program of Oyster Bay Town's Tercentenary, May 24 to June 14, "The Story of Oyster Bay" Town was written by Paul Bailey, by special arrangement with the Tercentenary Committee. The cover design of the program was the creation of Alfred J. Walker. All but five of the program's 16 pages are devoted to Mr. Bailey's historical sketch. The program was beautifully printed at the plant of the Oyster Bay Guardian.

The officers of the Tercentenary Committee were: Hon. Leonard W. Hall, president; Mrs. Raymond E. Lease, Mrs. Quentin Roosevelt, James Cardinale and John A. McGarr, vice-presidents; Benjamin Zipper, secretary, and Reginald P. Rose, treasurer.

An executive committee of five, with Mr. Hall as chairman, included Mrs. Richard Derby, A. Cornell Mulford, David Bernstein and Benjamin Zipper.

Associated with the officers and the Committee of Five, in an overall committee, were: Mrs. Conrad Berens, E. R. Chamberlin, Henry M. Curran, Robert F. DeGraff, Mrs. Nelson Doubleday, Mrs. Henry Ehlers Jr., George E. Fennebresque, Mrs. Irving N. Hutchinson, Dr. Mildred Wicker Jackson, John M. Lahr, Julius Mancini, Mrs. Mary E. Marshall, Mrs. Van S. Merle-Smith, Mrs. Antonio Ponvert, Michael F. Rich, Howard Caswell Smith, Hon. Percy D. Stoddart, Oscar Summers, James F. Walsh and the Rev. John Warren.

* * *

Oyster Bay Village History

Oyster Bay, the picturesque community on Long Island's North Shore, was once "frontier country" Van S. Merle-Smith, Jr. reveals in a new book "The Village of Oyster Bay: Its Founding and Growth from 1653 to 1700." During part of that early period, Oyster Bay was on the "frontier" between Dutch and English colonies on Long Island, and

Continued on next page

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Letters From Our Readers

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as such found itself continually the subject of debate from 1653 to 1664. In 1664 the English moved in to New Amsterdam and from then on Oyster Bay was under English rule. The new book (May 30, \$5.00) is privately printed and is distributed by Doubleday & Co., Garden City.

The important role played by the Quakers in that part of Long Island is also discussed in "The Village of Oyster Bay: Its Founding and Growth from 1653 to 1700" which is illustrated with old maps. The book is based on scholarly research as well as a warm "feeling" for Oyster Bay, as the author's ancestors were involved in the town's early history—notably, Henry Townsend, who built the first mill there in 1661.

Mr. Merle-Smith is Academic Head of Foxcroft School, Middleburg, Va. and lived in Oyster Bay from 1920 to 1946.

* * *

Switchboarder of 1904-5

I read with much interest John Tooker's article in this month's issue of the Forum, entitled "Hello Girls of Long Ago." It brought back to me many pleasant memories of bygone days. I refer to the fact that during the summer of 1904 and 1905 (nearly a half-century ago, you'll note) I was employed as a telephone switchboard operator in the office of the superintendent on the Pratt estate in what is now the City of Glen Cove.

The late Divine M. Munger, a colorful individual if ever there was one, the superintendent, will be readily recalled by oldtimers hereabouts. My weekly salary was the sum of three dollars. My hours were from seven a.m. to six p.m. with an hour off for lunch, except that on the Sabbath I only worked half of the day.

The switchboard in question was a very busy one for the reasons, among others, that the Pratt estate or, should I say, empire, was approaching the peak of its prosperity, wealth, power and influence

Continued on page 134

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Whaling's Expansion

Continued from Page 129

Fiji Islanders, Malaysians, West Indians, Africans and local Shinnecocks and Montauks were as common a sight as Caucasians. Though born sailors and fine whalers, they needed shipboard discipline. Between voyages they constituted quite a problem for the local authorities. Nevertheless, some of these visitors from far places became excellent citizens and their descendants are living here today.

There was plenty of employment on shore as well as on ships. Warehouses, chandleries, cooperages, blacksmith shops, try-works and shipyards all needed strong-armed men. Although a captain's word was law at sea, in port, declares Harry Sleight, captain and men mingled without distinction. The same was true of shipowners and other local businessmen. At Jim Smith's place, called North Battery, and on John Budd's dock, all men engaged in whaling or any of its many sidelines met on an even footing.

Cooperage shops were common gathering places. Here men made and repaired oil barrels. The whaleships carried their barrels "knocked down," below decks. It was the task of the ship's carpenter to put them together as they were needed. In the cooperage shops, the stacks of staves served as tiers of seats for those who came in to do their daily "chinning". Daniel Y. Bellows, Henry Tryon, Charlie Seeley and Henry Stewart ran Sag Harbor's principal cooperage shops. Sam L'Hommiedieu operated, besides a warehouse, a very busy rope walk. John Gawley had a shop for "gauging" oil before it was shipped to market. William Cooper made the finest whaleboats and John Fordham the best harpoons.

Charlie Douglas ran a chandlery and House Crowell had a sail-loft. There was also the so-called Music Hall, erected

by the Hunttings, where traveling troupes occasionally played and local talent staged benefit performances. Here and there all over town were large excavations, smeared with cement, for the storage of oil. Because of the great fire hazard, for Sag Harbor was fairly saturated with oil, water buckets were kept handy in stores, homes and on the streets. Notwithstanding this precaution, however, the whole shorefront and business section were destroyed in 1845.

Song Sparrows

Continued from page 127

is not the way nature preserves the balance among living things.

Well, this article has strayed far afield! How did we ever get on the subject of the shortcomings of robins' family-raising in an arrival-of-spring story?

Sunday morning, March 15th, had overcast skies and a southeast wind. I hit the beach with the first of the surf-casters and a few hours ahead of the rain. Bird talk and songs filled the dunes. Several kinds of sparrows scattered wildly from grass hummocks almost under my feet. Stunted pines and bayberry played host to many more of

the feathered folk. The redwings romped in the plume grass.

Spring was two days old!

Missed the Forum

I thought to do without the Forum, but find myself wanting those stories of the Island on which I have spent so much of my life. Lewis A. Eldridge Jr., M.D., Rensselaerville, N.Y.

Miss (Kate Wheeler) Strong surely has a fund of information on Long Island's past.

G.V.R., Rockville Centre



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The Indian Place-Names on Long Island and Islands Adjacent, with Their Probable Significations. William Wallace Tooker. 8 vo. cloth. First Edition. 1911.

Historic Long Island, Rufus R. Wilson. Illustrated. 8 vo. pictorial cloth. First edition. 1902.

History of N. Y. City. Over 100 illustrations. Thick 8 vo. 846 pages. Crude cloth. By Mary L. Booth. Yaphank's famous native daughter. First edition. 1859.

Just Hurting, by Harry T. Peters, illustrated, uncut. Published in 1935, this beautifully printed book, like all of the late author's works, is now a collector's gem.

Long Island Forum

When Money Was Cheap

SINCE reading "the Diary of George Templeton Strong," I have been going over our old papers, and have found a letter from the Diarist's father, George Washington Strong, to his brother, my great-grandfather, Thomas E. Strong. The letter is so interesting, showing as it does the financial conditions of the country and especially New York before the great depression of 1837, that I will give part of it, dated New York, October 20, 1829:

"Dear Brother: I scarcely know what to say to you about the \$1,000 which you have to loan. Money is at present very plenty here and it is very difficult to effect GOOD, that is to say SAFE, loans. You have no conception of the amount of money at loan in this city, and mortgage. I have no doubt that more than $\frac{3}{4}$ s of the city is at this moment under mortgage.

"There will be very great losses sustained, and mortgages loan. In many parts of the city real estate will not command hardly any price at a forced sale, and in Brooklyn it is still worse. The prospect is at present that things will grow worse instead of better in this respect. In the lower part of the city the price of real estate keeps up, but in the upper parts of the city it has declined from 25 to 33 per cent."

He goes on to say that he thinks the money would be safer loaned out in the country; that the trouble in the city was that men having money were so afraid of losing interest that they would lend on very poor security. He felt alarmed, he wrote, at the prospect, and admonished my great-grandfather to send him no more money as he had all he could do to invest his own.

A letter to my great-grandfather Thomas from another brother, Benjamin, dated May

Kate Wheeler Strong

27, 1837, described subsequent conditions in New York.

"My dear Brother: Before you receive this you will have heard of the suspension of payment of the Dry Dock Bank and that the other banks have come forward and redeemed the bills. Last night the other banks suspended specie payment and the Savings Bank in Chambers street suspended payment and closed its doors.

"Of course today all is confusion and dismay and what the outcome will be is known only to the Lord. The whole city is alive to the subject, and riots are feared. Thus far at 12 o'clock all is quiet. The banks are all solvent and if they can collect their own assets are amply able to pay their debts.

"I hope and trust you will feel for us here, and really ask your sympathy for us at this time, seeing the load of trouble that has befallen me all at once." It was signed Benjamin Strong.

In the end New York recovered. Great-grandfather lived on at Oakward, now Belle Terre, except when serving as the First Judge of Suffolk County. After his death, his brother Benjamin took care of the business affairs of my great-grandfather's many unmarried daughters.

Carl Fisher's Dream

Carl Graham Fisher, who made the spectacular but unsuccessful attempt to transform the Montauk dunes into a Miami Beach of the North and also revived without success the proposal that Montauk Point instead of New York City be made the landing place for trans-Atlantic liners was born at Greensburg, Indiana in 1874.

He first had a bicycle store at Greensburg and later manufactured bicycles. In 1904 he founded the Prest-O-Light Company. That same year as an auto racer he set a world's record for two miles in 2.02 minutes. Several years later he created the Indianapolis Speedway. He also erected the Lincoln and Dixie highway.

Later he purchased a huge swampland on the Florida coast and began a building boom which resulted in Miami Beach.


At the height of the boom era in 1927 he began the development of the Montauk Point project. He acquired ten thousand acres, erected the large Montauk Manor hotel, a seven story office building, golf courses, a polo field and a yacht basin. Twenty-five miles of roads were constructed and vast sums were spent in landscaping.

To do this Fisher mortgaged his Florida realty company. His total investments at Montauk were close to \$18,000,000.

In 1932 at the height of the depression he got into serious financial difficulty and his Montauk company went into receivership. It was reorganized several times. In 1938 at the last reorganization, although he remained on the board, he lost control. Most of his huge profits from Miami real estate were dropped into the Montauk venture.

Fisher with his wife Margaret who he had married at Montauk returned to Florida where he died in the summer of the next year.

Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood



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Letters From Our Readers

Continued From Page 131

and there were in course of construction on the estate several new modern buildings, the old barn, a large frame building, having been destroyed by fire in the summer of 1903. Many valuable horses perished in the disaster. I vividly recall the event.

Needless to say, there were not in Glen Cove during those years as many telephones as there are at present and the hello girls of 1953 receive more than three dollars weekly, a fact that reminds me of a retort made by the late William Maxwell Evarts when one of his colleagues in the Upper House remarked that George Washington, according to historians, once threw a quarter across the Potomac, viz: "Yes, that may be true but don't forget that in those days a quarter went much further than it does today."

I love the Forum and would no more think of discarding an issue after reading same than I would the National Geographic.

John P. McCarthy,
Glen Cove

Note: Wish that Glen Cove's venerable member of the Bar would reminisce more often through the columns of the Forum. Editor.

* * *

More About Bikes

Here's a bit more about the old bicycle days of 50 and more years ago. As with the auto of today, it was speed and more speed. Hordes would race out from the cities. Scorchers they were to country folks. Bicycle cops were appointed to enforce limited speed laws. The cops were not speedy enough to catch country lads on an open road.

Track and road-racing quickly became popular. The Merrick had its twenty-five mile course. Riders were handicapped. The course was closed for the duration of a race; great crowds lined the roadsides. A punctured tire cooked my goose.

A modern track of concrete was built at Manhattan Beach with ample accommodation for spectators

and riders alike. Here the fastest professional and amateur riders assembled weekly throughout the season. Generous prizes were offered. Eddie Ball, Tom Cooper, Earl Kaiser and Earl Gardener were fast favorites.

On one occasion a \$1000 purse was hung up for Pros. It was a handicap affair. One Lynbrook amateur turned Pro to enter. The money went west. A Midget rider, Jimmy Michaels from Wales created a sensation for speed here. Sitting erect on a high-g geared wheel he made speed records. His ability to follow close pace made it possible. At one record-breaking trial he followed a sextet (six men on a wheel). Jimmy was helped along by the vacuum created.

Dirt tracks were built for racing at Flushing, Lynbrook, Patchogue and more. One at Valley Stream was built for patrons and friends of Billy Smith's Road Rest. County fairs conducted Bike Races. Mincola was a favorite for Long Island Speedsters.

Most folks know about the trial spin of Charlie Murphy of Brooklyn ("Mile-a-Minute Murphy") over a course of planks laid down between Long Island Railroad rails near Farmingdale. The scheme was a project of the Road. Perhaps Hal Fullerton had a part in it. Another vacuum did the trick. Long Island trains would doubtless be in Charlie's way today? Many a leg-weary cyclist was carried by the LIRR with tender care and coin about this time.

The never-to-be-forgotten six-day races held at Madison Square Garden with noted riders from many foreign lands gave an international flavor. It was go-as-you-please riders for twenty-four hours a day. Cost of admission was low and crowds filled the Garden. One

could remain as long as they wished. A free night's lodging, sandwiches and drinks with enormous quantities of tobacco smoke mixed with restless naps was all part of the show.

The last of such races were well regulated and more human. Two-men teams worked on a schedule of taking grueling punishment. John and Menus Bedell, two Long Island boys, became popular and successful contenders in later such races.

Bicycle Shows were held annually in Madison Square Garden and attended by great numbers of people old and young. Much oratory and baloney about this or that make and gadgets galore.

Adding to the praise bestowed on the Roe Brothers of Patchogue, Hen and Nat Roe were indeed speedy on wheels. Mild mannered and agreeable, they were very popular with fans and competitors alike. As an amateur tandem team they were hard to beat. Nat on the front seat, Hen on the rear seat furnishing plenty of power.

On singles they were hot too. Hen usually rode from scratch; Nat with a slight handicap depending

Continued on page 137

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Mystery of an Anchor

THE recent death of Sarah Diodati Gardiner, owner of Gardiner's Island, called up memories of Captain Kidd, the Revolution and Fort Tyler off Gardiner's Point. Many have written of Gardiner's Island and surrounding waters, but nobody has positively identified the huge anchor that was hauled out of Gardiner's Bay in the early 1920's. The question still remains: Was it a British mudhook?

Russella J. Hazard of Sag Harbor and one of its leading historians has done much research on this topic. Miss Hazard writes from the John Jermain Memorial Library, just a stone's throw from the Whaling Museum and the Custom House: "The big anchor is mentioned in the Sag Harbor Express of June 8, 1920. I quote from that issue:

"A large ship's anchor, found by a beam trawl boat, in Gardiner's Bay, and raised by the lighter Ollie of the Bliss Co., may be seen at Maidstone bulkhead. The anchor weighs over 1500 pounds, has a shank eleven feet long and flukes seven feet wide. The wooden stock was gone but marline serving on the ring of the anchor was still in good condition. The anchor will be straightened, 'chipped' and painted and then placed in the park at the Bliss Co. torpedo testing station in Sag Harbor. Old time sailors say the anchor is not from a Sag Harbor whaleship as no ships of this period carried so large a 'hook'. Possibly the anchor may have been lost from a warship, for years ago many full-rigged ships anchored in Gardiner's Bay for practice and schoolships often spent the season in our waters."

Most east end historians agree that the anchor is not from a whaleship, not only on account of its great dimensions, but because whaleships did not lie at anchor near Bed-

ford Rocks where the anchor was found. Professor Arthur Tuthill (of the University of Vermont), a native of Cutchogue, is very familiar with the bay waters between Montauk and Riverhead. He concurs in the belief that the anchor may be one lost by the British fleet in the wild storm of January 22, 1781.

In a letter written by General George Washington and sent from New Windsor to Governor Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, dated February 6, 1781, we find this clue:

"We have just received an account that the enemy's fleet, employed in blockading that of our allies at Rhode Island, has lately suffered severely by a storm. One seventy-four is said to have been stranded and entirely lost on the east end of Long Island, another (some accounts say two others) dismasted and towed into Gardiner's Bay, and one

of ninety guns driven to the sea in great distress. I expect every moment a confirmation of this agreeable intelligence, and the particulars.

"I have the honor to be,
"George Washington."

Further evidence is found in Rochambeau's Mss. letters, quoted by Douglass Southall Freeman in his monumental Life of George Washington, and in Jared Sparks' Collected Works and Papers, from which is drawn the following, pages 9 and 10:

"The British squadron, employed in blockading the French fleet at Newport, was stationed during the winter of 1780-1781 in Gardiner's Bay at the east end of Long Island. The vessels were anchored in a line between Gardiner's Island and Plum Island. The naval force kept on this station was of course superior to that of the French at Newport. It consisted of one ship of ninety guns, four of seventy-four, three of sixty-four, one

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of fifty, and two or three frigates.

"On the 10th of January two French frigates and a transport, laden with various supplies for the fleet, set sail from Boston harbour. They arrived safely at Newport, after encountering three severe gales. The commander of the British fleet had gained intelligence of their departure from Boston and sent two line-of-battle ships and two frigates to intercept them. These vessels were driven back by the violence of the winds, and in the night of the 22d (Jan. 1781) much damage was sustained by the British fleet in Gardiner's Bay.

"When the morning dawned, a sixty-four was discovered standing to the south of Montauk Point under jury masts; the Culloden seventy-four was on a reef near Gardiner's Island; and the Bedford seventy-four was off New London, all of her masts having been carried away and her upper tier of guns thrown overboard. The Culloden was finally lost (see story by Mary E. Bell in Forum for February 1942), but her masts and guns were used to repair the two other ships.

"The America, a sixty-four, which had been driven out to sea and was supposed at first to be lost, returned to her Gardiner's Bay station on the 8th of February, without injury."

So it may well be that the anchor at Sag Harbor is a "hook" lost by the Bedford or one of her companions of the January 1781 disaster. The writer, home from a cruise to Sweden in the fall of 1920, tried to find manufacturers' marks or other identification on the anchor, but without success. We still wonder: Was it a British mudhook?

How A Designer Gets Her Start

The turning point in the career of Gertrud Rohrer, who is not yet a professional designer, came at last. She has had to choose the hard route in the struggle to realize her ambitions, but last month she took a big step forward. She won a \$500 prize offered by the manufacturers of Sherbrooke Rainwear who sponsored a design contest exclusively for students at the Traphagen School of Fashion, 1680 Broadway, New York, to create all-weather coats. Miss Rohrer's entry was the first-prize top winner among the almost 800 designs submitted.

She is an evening student at Traphagen, and came to New York from her native Germany only four years ago. Until she learned English she had to take a job as nursemaid, but later obtained an office position which enabled her to study design at night.

Mr. Lee Sherman who presented the prizes in assembly at Traphagen took Gertrud back to his company's workrooms and she is photographed here with the "boss" and his pattern maker, getting her first thrill as a designer checking the interpretation of her brain child as they do it in the trade.



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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 134

on the length of the race. They were good to look at in their crimson riding togs. Clarence (Mose) Rutland of Patchogue was also a fast rider.

Lynbrook had its club and a well-known speed member in Frank White. Frank's folks followed the bay and rumor had it that treading clams in the bay developed strong leg muscles and eating them perhaps created stamina. Be this as it may, Hen Roe and Frank were friendly opponents in many races. Both rode from scratch. It was nip and tuck.

How many old timers struggled over the Shinnecock Hills, reached Montauk, rode across the Jersey Meadows from Jersey City to Newark, rode from Brooklyn to Scranton in one day? Just for the fun of it and when caught in a storm, many remained up half the night cleaning bearings and drying and oiling the darned old rattle-traps.

George E. Hart
Wading River

* * *

Cold Spring Harbor Museum

The 10th annual report of the Whaling Museum at Cold Spring Harbor has just been issued by Walter K. Earle, vice-president and curator. The other officers are J. Barstow Smull, president; Leslie E. Peckham, secretary-treasurer, and Miss Mary J. Holmes, assistant curator.

The Museum is doing a fine work in displaying items of the whaling industry of a century ago in which that community, then known as Cold Spring played an important part.

* * *

"Hello Girls"

I am sure there must be others besides myself who can recall the days of which John Tooker wrote so interestingly in the June Forum under the heading "Hello Girls of Long Ago." A few Patchoguers who take the Forum got together recently and discussed this as well as the other fine stories that you are running.

If I am not mistaken, the first central phone office in Patchogue was in the old Jesse C. Mills building on Main Street about 1900 or maybe before. I recall one of the early male operators named Case who sometimes went out looking for the village policeman who was wanted on the phone.

G.R.R., Patchogue

* * *

"That Bicycle Craze"

George E. Hart in the June Forum reminds us that the Floyd-Jones fountain at Massapequa and the Vanderbilt well at Oakdale, two very popular resting places beside Merrick Road in the days of "century runs", by Brooklyn and New

York wheelmen, disappeared years ago.

Also gone these many years are the hotels and other eating places such as Bill Graham's Anchorage Inn at Blue Point, the Van De Water tavern at Massapequa and Roe's Hotel at Patchogue.

Wish Mr. Hart would give us some more of his reminiscences.

George Torry, Jamaica

* * *

Forum Authors Cited

James Taylor Dunn, Librarian of the N. Y. State Historical Association (headquarters Cooperstown) cites the following authors and outstanding articles from the January, February and March numbers of the Long Island Forum:

Kate Wheeler Strong's Land Deals on Ye Little Neck, A. C. Edwards' Island's Mormon Dignitary, George R. Blackman's Island's Early Quakers, and Dr. Clarence Ashton

Wood's Anderson and His Whale, also A Schooner and Her Skipper.

* * *

He Knew Hempstead When

There are many phases of LIRR history that are relatively unknown. For example, I have found little on

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CARMAN HOMESTEAD, 1776
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the LIRR receivership of 1850. This seems to be an almost forgotten chapter. It shouldn't be too difficult to discover the essential facts.

Of course, eastern Long Islanders remember "The Scoot" that ran from Sag Harbor via Eastport and Manorville to Greepport for many years. Less well known is the service from Hempstead to Mineola via Garden City. This must have started in the very early 1880's, but ended in May 1908 when the Hempstead branch was electrified.

Actually, the third rail extended from Hempstead to Mineola and the service could have continued. But there was the competition of the trolley that had started in 1902, and the additional facts that this Hempstead-Mineola train was a main line and Oyster Bay connection. In fact, it went to Oyster Bay on some trips, while Hempstead had grown to the point where every train was needed all the way to Jamaica and New York-Brooklyn.

It wasn't practical to share service with the Oyster Bay branch. Also, the new station at Garden City Estates (now Nassau Blvd.) and soon thereafter at Stewart Manor, made the service to Mineola impractical. At a time when Garden

City was the only station on the branch between Floral Park and Hempstead, the Hempstead-Garden City-Mineola shuttle did not inconvenience anyone and was, in addition, a means of direct transportation between Hempstead and Garden City and the county seat at Mineola.

As one looks back thru the years, it seems to me that life was more pleasant in the olden days than it is today. The thing that has changed our life has been the automobile. We can, at a moment's notice, jump in our car and reach points ten or twenty miles away in 15 or 20 minutes. In the old days, this wasn't possible. We were forced to live our lives within a narrower radius of our homes. This made for neighborliness, and a more intimate acquaintance with our own neighborhood and our own village. When we moved to Hempstead in 1907, we knew almost everyone in the village, and I knew every road and path for four or five miles around. Today, one frequently does not

know the person who lives in the next house. Today we have an acquaintance with a wider area, but a less intimate acquaintance. Our attention has been diffused and lost its strength by this very diffusion or spreading of our attention.

Felix E. Reifschneider,
Box 774 Orlando, Fla.

* * *

"Hello Girls of Long Ago"

Mrs. Tooker (the subject of Mr. Tooker's story in the June issue) liked the article but had some criticism to make of the operator picture. The dress belongs to a much earlier period, for most of the operators, as I can vouch for myself, wore shirtwaists, usually white, and a dark skirt, and that type transmitter did not appear on L.I. until about 1905. Notice the Bedford picture where the suspended transmitters hang in front of the girl's faces. I saw them myself in the Jamaica office in 1904. Mrs. T. says

Continued on back cover

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A limited number of sets of the Long Island History, compiled by Paul Bailey and first published in 1949 by the Lewis Historical Publishing Company of New York, has been made available through the Long Island Forum at one-third off the publishers' price.

This drastic reduction from the original price of \$46.50 is made possible by eliminating volume 3 which consists entirely of biographical sketches.

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logy and archaeology, there are separate chapters on each of the towns in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the history of the leading church denominations, whaling, fishing, shell fisheries, agriculture, medicine, banking, education, aviation and many other subjects.

Long Island Birdlife is compiled by Edwin Way Teale, nationally known authority; the island's mammals, by Dr. W. J. Hamilton, Cornell zoologist. The most extensive coverage of the island's Indians ever printed was prepared by John H. Morice. Among the authors represented are J. Russel Sprague, Dr. Oscar G. Darlington, Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Miss Jacqueline Overton, Rev. John K. Sharp, Chester R. Blakelock, Osborn Shaw, Herbert F. Ricard, Preston R. Bassett, Robert R. Coles, Halsey B. Knapp, Nancy Boyd Willey, Mary E. Bell—in all more than forty such authorities.

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CLOSED MONDAYS

Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 138

that type transmitter may have
been in use in the cities at that time.

John Tooker
Babylon

* * *

The L. I. Naturalist

The Baldwin Bird Club's second
number of The L. I. Naturalist,
edited by Edwin Way Teale, is well
worth having and preserving.

* * *

That shore whaling article by Ed-
itor Bailey (May Forum) was
grand. Most thorough I have seen.
Mrs. Malcolm M. Willey, Minnea-
polis. (Dr. and Mrs. Willey summer
at Sag Harbor where the latter is
village historian).

* * *

Evelyn Rowley Meier's article on
the "Grist Mill at Wading River"
(June Forum) was ably done.
Thanks.

(Miss) C. Bellows, Massapequa

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